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IX.

RECENT FICTION.

Trollope's *Is he Popenjoy?*
James's *The Europeans*.

James's *Daisy Miller*.
Black's *Macleod of Dare*.

Burnett's *That Lass o' Lowrie's*.

NOVEL-WRITING has become a business, almost a trade. Of those who engage in it, nearly all—the exceptions being very rare—do so merely for the purpose of making money by supplying a demand. For there has come to be, and indeed there has long been in existence in regard to novels, that first factor in the equation of the political economists, a demand; this demand being something very different from the interest awakened by the appearance of a book showing great original power, such for example as “*Waverley*,” “*The Pickwick Papers*,” “*Vanity Fair*,” “*The Scarlet Letter*,” “*Adam Bede*,” or “*Jane Eyre*.” There are millions of people in England, and millions in America, and almost millions in Australia, to whose enjoyment of life novels are almost as necessary as food is to their life itself, every one of whom asks month by month, almost week by week, a new story. They, many of them, take some credit to themselves for the time they pass in “reading”; complacently contrasting themselves with idlers and those who are given up to the frivolities of life. A vain and foolish notion! for there is probably no more insidious form of laziness, no method of passing time more absolutely void of exertion of any kind, than novel-reading, as novels are read by most of those for whom they are written. As a child opens its mouth and has sugar-plums put into it, so the ordinary novel-reader sits quietly and thoughtlessly, and has a story poured through his eyes into his mind, or into what serves him in that capacity. It is in quite another spirit and with another purpose that great works of imagination are approached by those who can appreciate them.

To meet this demand for novels, thousands of pens are constantly employed. The work of most of them never sees the light; but of the number that are set before the public, the general reader has probably no just notion. Moderately rating the number published yearly in London as three hundred, we may be sure

that fifty are published in the United States during the same time, which makes about one new English novel for every "week-day" in the year. Of this mass of fiction nearly the whole passes at once into oblivion. And yet not only is the writing of a good novel the great literary achievement of the day, but good novels are written more and more frequently year by year; as, when all men were soldiers, to be a valiant soldier and a great captain was the highest of all distinctions, and valiant soldiers were common and great captains were not rare; as, when London was full of playwrights and new plays were comparatively as common as new novels are now, the Elizabethan drama came into life, and above the crowd of successful men rose Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, and Beaumont and Fletcher. The great distinction is that which is won in the face of many competitors; and much competition exalts the standard of excellence.

Really good novels are, however, rare enough; so rare in proportion to the numbers of the people who read them, that the production of one is not only a sure distinction but a certain source of considerable money profit. Since the appearance of "Daniel Deronda" only one good novel, or perhaps it might be said two, have been published in England. Of the better of these Anthony Trollope is the author. His last novel has a name that would have deterred the public from reading it had it been the work of an unknown writer. Why he should have given it so ridiculous a title as "Is he Popenjoy?" when "The Dean" or "The Dean's Daughter" would have been so much better and so much more appropriate and descriptive, it is difficult to divine. The representation of character, of which Miss Burney in "Evelina" gave the English-reading world, if not the first, at least the most conspicuous and successful early example, has gradually become the one great purpose of the novel-writer. To this Mr. Trollope adds, incidentally perhaps, but surely not unconsciously, the portraiture of the society of his day. There is in all literature nothing like the picture which is presented in his novels of the social life of England in the middle of the nineteenth century. The truthfulness of the picture is confessed by those whom it represents. It is not merely vividly imagined, as an untrue thing may be and seem real, as for example Carlyle's Robespierre. It is "the form and pressure of the time." Even the most intelligent and fastidious women in the society which Mr. Trollope's novels represent admit that he portrays that society with absolute faithfulness; they con-

fess that he makes them act and talk to each other just as they do act and talk in their every-day life ; and this admission they make in regard to him alone of all those who have undertaken to represent the higher classes of English society, Bulwer-Lytton not excepted. This being the case, it is worthy of remark by the way that Trollope's social pictures conform so nearly as they do to the traits of corresponding life in this country. That in the former certain men are called lords, or deans, or what not, and that there are great houses, and parks, and a tenantry, and fox-hunting, and so forth, are incidents for which allowance is to be made, but which do not touch the soul or even the substance of the picture. These are the mere outside, the accidents of the life that is set before us. It remains none the less true that as Mr. Trollope's personages pass before us singly or in groups in the familiar intercourse of their every-day life, the sense of reality and of intimacy is so strongly awakened in us that we have sometimes a sense of shame, as if we were watching our friends and neighbors from behind a curtain, or listening to them through the crack of a door. No such effect as this is produced by the best work of the best novelists of France or of Germany.

In Mr. Trollope's last novel he is, however, less in sympathy than usual with his American readers. The great personage of the book, the one that gives the story its strength and vitality, is Dean Lovelace ; and the conditions of his life and the springs of his action are practically so unknown to us that, although we can understand them and may sympathize with them, we yet constantly feel their foreignness. The Dean of Brotherton is the son of a well-to-do livery-stable-keeper. This is his origin. As to himself, he is a man of character, of ability, of the highest culture, of fine presence, of personal dignity, and of unexceptionable manners. Moreover, he is a tenderly loving father, and a man whose life is sweetened by good nature, and whose passage through the world is made easy by humor, that sovereign and subtile lubricant. That such a man, even after he had become wealthy and attained the position of a dean, should be hampered by his origin, and should find it so in the way of his complete and proper recognition, and of the happiness of his daughter in the society into which they are thrown—that it becomes, next to that daughter's happiness and as a means thereto, the chief object of his life to assert himself socially, and to bring certain persons, people of rank among those about him, to a thoroughly respectful consideration of him and his daugh-

ter—is almost incomprehensible to those who have not been very directly under the influence of aristocratic institutions. Be this as it may, the man is an admirable creation. He will not suffer by comparison with Archdeacon Grantly or with Mrs. Proudie. And the difference between him and the Archdeacon is worthy of remark ; the distinction is so fine and yet so clear, and it is so plainly produced, almost if not altogether by their difference of birth and early breeding. And yet the difference between them is as clearly distinguishable as if they were men of opposite natures and circumstances, although the difference—the inner unlikeness in character—is produced mainly by self-consciousness. The Archdeacon is conscious that, besides being archdeacon, he is a gentleman of recognized position. There are other men indeed who may take precedence of him, as there are men who may take precedence of a duke ; but his position as a gentleman is as clearly acknowledged as a duke's, and it is not necessary for him to assert it, or to trouble himself at all about it. Dean Lovelace, on the other hand, knowing that he has every other advantage of the Archdeacon's but that one, feels constantly the lack of the assuredness which it would give him ; and in this consciousness on the part of the two men lies chiefly the difference between them in their actions, and it may almost be said their characters. The Dean of Brotherton, in his union of worldly wisdom and a sleepless ambition with perfect honor, with kindness and good-fellowship, and with a capacity of tenderest love for his daughter, is one of Mr. Trollope's happiest conceptions, and one of those which he has been most perfectly successful in delineating. He has never shown a clearer eye or a steadier hand.

The other personage in this book who commands most attention, and who also removes it from American sympathy, is the Marquis of Brotherton, who is a pendant to Thackeray's Marquis of Steyne, but a far more detestable character. Steyne's part might possibly be played here by a very rich, a very important, and a very coarse-minded man ; but a Brotherton in America would be impossible. He is not very rich, for a Stewart or a Vanderbilt might buy him over and over again ; nor is he a man of much importance. But he is a marquis, rich, and the head of the family ; and, having the position given to him by these circumstances, he is able to tyrannize over his mother and sisters, to be brutally insolent to his brother, and to make himself pestilently offensive to the world in general, with impunity. The Marquis of Brotherton is a

personage impossible in America. At the North he would be excluded from every decent household ; at the South he would be "shot on sight." And yet this marquis is not only possible in nature and consistent with himself, but a natural, although an extremely rare, product of the society of which he forms a part, and from which he yet holds himself as much aloof as possible. This Mr. Trollope makes apparent without saying it, and without condemning the system of that society ; for he writes as an artist, portraying men and women as he sees them, and not as a dissector of morbid social anatomy, nor even as a satirist, except when he turns his eyes upon anything American.

From the long-practiced British novelist let us turn to a young American, Mr. Henry James, Jr., who, although he is the author of several books, including now four novels, is, compared with Mr. Trollope, almost a tyro. But, although one of the younger writers of the day, Mr. James is no timid experimenter, doubtful of his powers, ignorant of the field upon which he has entered, and uncertain of his aims. We do not know a living writer, except Matthew Arnold, who produces upon his readers a greater impression of self-knowledge, of self-restraint, or of perpetual self-consciousness, nor one whose work shows more evidence of fastidious taste, cautious proceeding, and careful elaboration. Indeed, in his mental traits and literary workmanship, Mr. James does not belong to the English school (English and American being in literature but one), but rather to the French. His cast of thought is French ; he has the French nicety of taste, the French reserve of manner, dexterity of hand, and fineness of finish ; what wit he has is French, and he is French in the paleness and paucity of his humor. He seems to have Balzac before him as his model ; and the best thing he has yet produced is "*Madame de Maulves*," a sketch which appeared in the "*Galaxy*" magazine, and which Balzac himself need not have been ashamed to own.

Mr. James's latest work in fiction of any importance is "*The Europeans*," which is intended, of course, as a companion piece to "*The American*." The author of "*The Europeans*" styles it upon his title-page a sketch, probably recognizing himself, by that word, its absence of plot, and confessing that in writing it he did not propose to himself to interest his readers strongly in the fate of his personages. And indeed the sayings and doings of these shadowy people are not such as to trouble us much as to what becomes of them. Their sayings are many and their doings few. The Euro-

peans are two European-born Americans of very Bohemian type and tendency : a youngish woman, Eugenia Young, who as the morganatic wife of a German prince has received the title of Baroness Munster, and her brother, a clever draughtsman, half amateur, half professional, who is engaged in furnishing sketches to an illustrated journal in Europe. To put the matter plainly, the Baroness Munster is an adventuress, nothing more nor less. As an adventuress she became a morganatic wife of the brother of a petty German grand duke (it was thirty years ago), and now as an adventuress she comes to America to try her fortune in finding some rich American to take her in some fashion—as a wife preferable of course—off her German prince's hands. In the first place it is difficult to see why these people are called "the Europeans." They are in a certain sense indeed the product of the conditions of society upon the continent of Europe, as the Marquis of Brotherton and Dean Lovelace are the product of the conditions of society in England. But they are not, like the Marquis and the Dean, indigenous products of that society, integral parts of it ; they are waifs and strays—Europeanized Americans of a not very admirable sort. It was a little fretting to see Mr. Newman set forth as "the American" by Mr. James ; that personage being hardly, we think, what Mr. James himself would like to have accepted as a fair representative of the social product of his country. But Mr. James's Europeans have really no claim whatever to the style and title which he bestows upon them ; being simply cosmopolite Bohemians of European origin ; folk which the real people of no country would acknowledge as being of themselves, not to say take pride in owning.

These adventurers find their New England kinsfolk living in one of the suburbs of Boston, and are kindly received by them and placed in a pretty cottage near their own house. There the Baroness and her brother remain week after week, month after month, visiting the big house, doing nothing, suffering nothing, getting into no trouble and therefore getting out of none, making no material for a story even of the slightest kind, but revealing their own characters and drawing out those of their cousins, young and old. These cousins are a father, Mr. Wentworth, and two daughters, Charlotte and Gertrude, who seem to be presented as types of New England people of their condition. And what character they have, it may be acknowledged, is New-England-ish. Their common trait seems to be a pale, intellectual asceticism ; but besides this they have very little character at all. Their coldly moral view of life is

admirably described by Mr. James. As he makes Felix say to Gertrude, who is falling in love with him, she and her family "take a painful view of life." This is also indicated reflexively by Gertrude, who, going from the bare neatness and respectability of New England to the Baroness's drawing-room in the little cottage, which the latter has decked and softened with curtains and colored drapery (some of it rather dingy), looks at it, and then "'What is life, indeed,' without curtains?" she secretly asked herself; and she appeared to herself to have been leading hitherto an existence singularly garish, and totally devoid of festoons." These Yankee girls have none of the conventional reserves to which Felix has been accustomed; and the effect upon him is thus delicately suggested: "He had known fortunately many virtuous gentlewomen, but it now appeared to him that in his relations with them (especially when they were unmarried) he had been looking at pictures under a glass. He perceived at present what a nuisance the glass had been—how it perverted and interfered, how it caught the reflection of other objects and kept you walking from side to side." These traits of character and others like them, on both sides, are touched by Mr. James with a dainty and skillful hand.

Although Mr. James's Wentworths may be recognized as possible New England people, they can not be accepted as fair representatives, mentally or physically, of their class. His description of the young ladies personally is puzzling. Gertrude, whose slumbering love for the vanities of the world is aroused by the Baroness's festoons, and who finally captivates Felix, is described as being "tall and pale, thin and a little awkward; her hair was fair and perfectly straight; her eyes were dark, and they had the singularity of seeming at once dull and restless—differing herein, as you see, fatally from the ideal fine eyes, which we always imagine to be both brilliant and tranquil." Her sister Charlotte "was also thin and pale; but she was older than the other; she was shorter, and she had dark smooth hair." And yet these most unattractive young ladies are afterward referred to more than once as beautiful. The truth seems to be that Mr. James, clever literary artist as he is, is not strong in imagination. His personages do not exist, even for himself, as living, independent, "self-contained" human beings. They act and speak only as he wishes them to act and speak from time to time. He has no personal respect for them. How could it be otherwise? How could he treat them with any deference when they plainly have no existence for him out of the range of his own

consciousness? He calls "The Europeans" a sketch; and indeed its effect is very sketch-like as well as very French. It brings to mind some of those very clever things of which so many are done by French painters: a mere outline, with a dot or a line suggestive of light and shade set here and there, and then filled with color very faintly washed in; the whole thing indicative of the great skill that comes from careful training, but nevertheless a very shadowy hint of humanity, demonstrative rather of great half-exercised powers on the part of the artist than of the solid and vital personality of the subject. The author seems to be making his sketches, just as Felix did his, to send them to his illustrated paper. Hence it is, probably, that while they are touched off so cleverly they are so unsatisfactory. And yet this lack of individuality and vital force in their personages is the great defect of all Mr. James's novels. His men and women, although they talk exceedingly well, are bloodless, and remind one of the "*vox et præterea nihil*" of his youth. This shadowy, bloodless effect is not at all the consequence of the particular type of New England personage depicted in "The Europeans"; for, besides that it is manifest in the peopling of all of Mr. James's novels, let the Wentworths, any or all of them, be compared with Madame Launay in Trollope's recent "*Lady of Launay*," which is a mere sketch no longer than Mr. James's own "*Daisy Miller*." It consists chiefly of a pair of every-day lovers, and of an old lady who is ready to sacrifice everything and everybody, herself included, upon what she regards as the altar of duty. The lovers have the virtue of constancy; the old lady, Madame Launay, that of inexorable firmness. She is ill, she is almost bed-ridden, she becomes a shadow; but there is more strength, more individuality in this attenuated old woman than in a regiment of Mr. Wentworths. There is one scene in this little sketch in which Philip Launay faces his mother and wins a victory over her, partly by his boldness in assaulting her fortress of will, and partly by the treachery of love within the walls, in which that young man outweighs a ton of such men as are in "The Europeans," although one of them, Mr. Brand, is an enormous specimen of muscular Christianity, and the other is the sinfully positive and joyous Felix Young. This is the question in regard to Mr. James's ultimate success as a novel-writer—whether he will be able to bring before us living personages in whose fate we take an interest. As to his literary skill there is no question. The impression which Felix, always gay, always a little aggressive in his fullness of animal

spirits, makes upon the shy and shrinking Charlotte, is illustrated—we might say illuminated—with a little flash of wit of which the most brilliant French writer might be proud: “Poor Charlotte could have given no account of the matter that would not have seemed unjust both to herself and to her foreign kinsman; she could only have said—or rather she never would have said it—that she did not like so much gentlemen’s society at once.”

The moral pedantry and the chilly unemotional life characteristic of a not inconsiderable part of New England society in past generations are delicately exposed all through the book. These might have depressed a much less sybaritic person than the Bohemian Baroness. As the story, if story it must be called, draws to a close, these motives find happy expression in the view taken by Mr. Wentworth of the love affairs of Gertrude, who was with his approval to have been given to Mr. Brand, the big young minister, but who with that gentleman’s consent transfers herself to Felix. When the change was made known to him, “Where are our moral grounds?” demanded Mr. Wentworth, who had always thought that Mr. Brand would be “just the thing for a younger daughter with a peculiar temperament.” And soon after, when he is urged to consent to the marriage, he again reverts to his cherished view of her case: “‘I have always thought,’ he began slowly, “‘that Gertrude’s character required a special line of development.’” This brings to mind Mr. Howells’s humorous presentation of the same trait of character in his charming “Lady of the Aroostook,” yet incomplete. When the Rev. Mr. Goodlow’s advice is asked in regard to the unfortunate circumstance of Lydia Blood’s being the only woman on board that vessel, and her making the voyage to “Try-East” in company with five men, exclusive of the crew, he replies, “I think Lydia’s influence upon those around her will be beneficial, whatever her situation in life may be.”

But, merely remarking that Mr. James commits an error of fact and of time in making people of the position of the Wentworths, living in the suburbs of Boston, so ignorant as they are represented to be in regard to European social life and art and literature only thirty years ago, say 1845, we turn to his “Daisy Miller.” This he calls a study; and probably it is, as surely it might have been, a study from nature. Daisy Miller is a beauty, and, without being exactly a fool, is ignorant and devoid of all mental tone or character. She dresses elegantly, has “the tournure of a princess,” and is yet irredeemably vulgar in her talk and her conduct. She shocks all

Europeans and all well-bred Americans by the terms on which she is with the courier of her party, and by making chance acquaintances with men and flirting with them. She has a grand affair of this kind in Rome, which, after excluding her from the society of more reserved American women, ends in her going to see the Coliseum by moonlight with her Roman cavalier, who is not a gentleman, and taking there the fever of the country and dying. In Daisy Miller Mr. James has undertaken to give a characteristic portrait of a certain sort of American young woman, who is unfortunately too common. She has no breeding, little character, a headstrong will, in effect no mother, and with all this has personal attractions and a command of money which are very rare in Europe, even among people of rank. As she flares through Paris, and flits from place to place over the continent, attended but not controlled by her parents, she is the wonder and horror of all decorous people, American and European. Mr. James's portrait is very faithful. He has succeeded to admiration in the difficult task of representing the manner in which such people as Mrs. and Miss Miller talk ; the difficulty being caused by the extremely characterless nature of their conversation, which is never coarse, or very vulgar, or even very foolish. It is simply inane and low-bred, and is marked by certain slight perversions of language ; for example, "going around," instead of "going about," of which one phrase, by the way, Mr. James makes rather too much. It is perhaps well that he has made this study, which may have some corrective effect, and which should show European critics of American manners and customs the light in which the Daisy Millers are regarded by Americans themselves. But the probability is that, on the contrary, Daisy Miller will become the accepted type and her name the *sobriquet* in European journalism of the American young woman of the period.

William Black has returned to the scene of his former success. It might be said of him that in his last novel once more his foot is on his native heath, and his name is Macleod. The signal failure of "Madcap Violet" has evidently startled the author of the admirable "Princess of Thule" ; and "Macleod of Dare" is a desperate effort to renew the Gaelic spell which in that book and in "A Daughter of Heth" he cast upon the public. To a certain degree the effort is successful ; but it is not entirely so. Some of the personages in "Macleod of Dare" are interesting, and the story will certainly command the pleased attention of many readers ; but the book has many weak places, and some great faults. It is pervaded

by the one great fault of constantly apparent effort, of a straining after "sensational" effect; and in its catastrophe this is pushed past the limit of the endurable. The two principal personages are as strongly contrasted as it is possible that two members of civilized society at this age of the world could be. Macleod is noble, generous, tender-hearted, unselfish to the verge of human possibility, but yet at bottom an untamed Highlander, capable of desperate actions, and incapable of submission to the restraints of cultivated, not to say of civilized life—almost incapable of their comprehension. It was to a certain extent a very clever device to bring such a man in contact with a beautiful, soft-mannered, selfish, and utterly heartless woman, the product of London life at the present day, like the actress Gertrude White. Macleod's noble nature is as open as the day. To him deceit, subterfuge of any kind, or a mean motive, is absolutely impossible. The woman whom he loves at first fatuously, and afterward desperately, is as faithless as a cat or a she-fox, and is always acting, not only on the stage but at home with her father and her sister, who yet see through her; for she is shallow and weak, and the only depths which she fathoms are the little depths of meanness. Flattered by the grand passion of such a man as the handsome Macleod, borne down perhaps by its strength, and willing to become the wife of a Scotch baronet and to exchange the theatre and her little house in London for Castle Dare, she engages herself to him, and he rides upon the crest of happiness. But she does not love him; and a visit to Castle Dare, where his mother and a female cousin are, soon gives her a distaste for the harsh and simple life that awaits her there, and makes her long for the flesh-pots and the flatteries of London. She soon says to her father that she shall not be sorry to get away from Castle Dare, and this when her lover is quivering in every fibre of his excitable nature with delight in her mere presence; for she neither makes love to him nor suffers him to make love to her. She returns to London, and briefly, in social slang phrase, she throws him over, and engages herself to a distinguished painter—"a woman-man," as the Highland huntsman, sailor, and swimmer calls him. Macleod, whose physical health and joyousness conceal a morbidly sensitive nature, has fretted himself ill under her coldness, and when he hears of her engagement to the painter he goes mad; that is, he becomes a monomaniac upon the subject of his love. Only on the assumption of his monomania can his subsequent conduct be regarded as any other than savage, fiendish. A faithful Gaelic henchman

of his, Hamish, whose admirably depicted character is not quite new, for it brings to mind another in "A Princess of Thule," hates the beautiful, soft-mannered Englishwoman, because of the deplorable condition into which her indifference has brought the master for whom at any time he would give his life; and he suggests a plan to Macleod for carrying off Gertrude—plainly, for abducting her and forcing her inclinations. They go to London in Macleod's yacht, and the plot succeeds: Gertrude is taken on board the *Umpire* into the northern seas again. She still refuses Macleod; and he, seeing a tremendous equinoctial storm approaching, sends Hamish and the rest on shore on a little island, awaits the storm with Gertrude, and the yacht goes down with them together.

This is poor business for the author of "A Daughter of Heth," "The Adventures of a Phaeton," and "A Princess of Thule." It is artistically no better than the melodrama that wins the applause of a cheap theatre. Essentially Macleod's act is no better or other than that of the jealous ruffian of the slums who murders his "girl" because she "goes with another feller." It is dressed up very skillfully, and by Mr. Black's art is elevated in seeming into an act of just retribution, aided by the powers of nature, and accompanied by the self-sacrifice of love driven to desperation. But, for all that, it is simple revenge, murder, and suicide. Mr. Black, it must be confessed, carries us through the strain of this catastrophe with a strong hand; but all his art cannot, upon a moment's reflection, conceal the base and savage character of Macleod's conduct, although we may partly excuse *him* on the assumption that he has become a maniac. The development of Gertrude's character is an admirable piece of work. The author reveals with great delicacy the utter baseness of her smooth and selfish nature; and, more, he shows us, without describing, one of those women, happily rare, who, although they may not be without passions, are wholly devoid of sexual tenderness. Gertrude White was incapable of loving either man or child—the child that she might herself have borne, or its father.

Of all recent fiction, the flower and crown is "That Lass o' Lowrie's." Its appearance, like that of "Jane Eyre" and "Adam Bede," marks the advent of a new writer of original power. What the range of that power may be, and what its endurance, is to be shown in the future. The conception itself is admirable, and it embodies in a most impressive manner a thought, or rather a sentiment, which is not new, but which is widespread and strong, and which has never before been born into flesh and blood. The exist-

ence of such a noble soul and such noble beauty as Joan Lowrie's, in a condition of life so low and so coarsening as that of a Lancashire coal-pit girl, has doubtless occurred to other minds as among the possibilities ; but it has been reserved for Mrs. Burnett to show us the workings of such a woman's soul, to make us feel the influence of such a woman's beauty, to develop her before us by varied influences into a thoughtful, gentle woman, to let us see her love for a man so much above her that she deems herself hardly fit to speak to him grow into the one absorbing passion of her life, which she yet sacrifices in mute agony rather than put him to shame. There are other personages in the story, all of which are admirable, even down to Nib the terrier. Fergus Derrick is a complete man, and so different from the usual woman's model man. Old Sammy Craddock is a grotesque, yet full of life and nature. Anice Barholm is a new woman, and a very winning one ; and her father, the Rev. Harold Barholm, in his embodiment of mingled good nature and colossal conceit, is one of the most successful figures in the story. But before Joan Lowrie they all "pale their ineffectual fires." Like a great actress, she comes before us, and at once takes the stage ; but it is a shame even to compare anything in her to acting, to hint that there may be any likeness between her and such a creature as Gertrude White. We feel her presence throughout the book. From the time when we first see her at the pit's mouth, we have an apprehension of her nature, its grandeur and its richness, and of the supreme loveliness of her—soul and body. We see, too, what her heart's trial is to be, although we do not see how she will go through it or what will be its issue. The changes which are worked in her—which yet are not changes, but developments—are brought about with admirable skill, it might be said with skill intuitive. The development of her womanly tenderness through her care of poor Liz's child, the elevation and chastising of her nature by her acquaintance with the story of Christ's life and suffering, and the quickening of her womanly reserve by the growth of her love and the sense of her humiliation, advancing side by side with equal steps—these unite to make the portrayal of the character of Joan Lowrie one of the finest feats in modern novel-writing. And all this is done so quietly, with such a firm hand, with such reserve of power ! It is, indeed, very admirable. Some of Mrs. Burnett's earlier stories have been published in book form : "Pretty Polly Pemberton," "Lindsay's Luck" (which has an American Robert Lindsay, a fine fellow, for its hero), "Surly Tim," and others. Although much

inferior to "That Lass o' Lowrie's," they show in common with it, to a certain degree, the power of making living men and women, and setting them before us in free natural action. What Mrs. Burnett may be able to do in writing of greater elaboration than she has yet attempted, cannot of course be now even conjectured ; but she has already shown that, among all the novel-writers of the present generation, not one has surpassed her in vividness and strength of imagination. But, if she were never to write another book, we should owe her perpetual thanks for "That Lass o' Lowrie's." It is a book of which all women may well be jealous ; for no man whose love is worth having can read it and lay it down not more than half in love with his ideal of Joan Lowrie.

RICHARD GRANT WHITE.